

Backstage

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER - FOR SUBSCRIBERS

A new man at the helm



Steve Jarratt, former editor of Future's gaming technology magazine, *Edge*, is the new man in the *AF* hot seat.

By now, most of you will have realised that Marcus Dyson has left the *Amiga Format* hot seat for pastures new (to Team 17, as if you didn't know!). Which leaves me in the unenviable position of editor of the biggest, and invariably best, computer mag in the UK, if not Europe (although we can't quite compete with the Japanese title *Famicon Tsushin* which sells around 750,000 copies a week!).

I'm probably a new face to most of you, so let me introduce myself. I'm Steve Jarratt and I've been working on computer magazines since 1986 when, as a C64 fanatic, I joined the *Zzap!64* team. Since then I've worked on *Crash*, *Commodore User*, *ACE*, *Sega Power*, *Commodore Format*, *Total!* and *Edge*. So, after my nomadic roamings, it somehow seems fitting that I should be moving back on to a Commodore computing magazine!

I've been at Future Publishing for around five years, having drifted from magazine to magazine in my unending quest for a 'cushy number'. In that respect, taking over a behemoth like *AF* may not seem like such a great idea; but in terms of sheer industry clout, *AF* is a monster. And as Future Publishing's flagship, I'm honoured to have been given the chance to take the helm.

I certainly won't be making any drastic changes to *Amiga Format* - after all, if it ain't broke, don't fix it (and with a monthly readership of over 140,000, *AF* must be doing something right).

But there's always room for improvement, so we'll be tweaking what's there to make *AF* better, prettier and more accessible. Whatever happens, I want feedback from readers, and as subscribers, your opinions are rated higher than most. Speak to me guys (and gals), I want to know what you think.

Starting with *Backstage* just exactly what would you like to see featured here? More letters? More gossip? Please, let me know...

Up until a few weeks ago I was the editor of *Edge* - Future's gaming technology magazine - and as such I've been afforded a view of the entire computer and videogames industry, from Super Nintendo and Mega

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**ISSUE SIXTY
JUNE '94**

What I do!



Julie Tolley - Deputy Editor

In this part of *Backstage*, we take a look at the *Amiga Format* team, the people who make the magazine what it is. This month, **dep ed** Julie Tolley explains how she keeps the *AF* office running like a well-oiled machine...

Working on *Amiga Format* isn't like working anywhere else - it's a strange mixture of chaos, calm, madness and professionalism. Most of the team could do with four pairs of hands, eyes and ears to deal with everything, but we are mere mortals so things get a tad fraught and stress levels reach a crescendo when we go to press.

A jack of all trades, that's what being dep ed on *Amiga Format* is all about. I have to write things like news, boss people about a lot, and make editor-type decisions when the editor isn't there. Then there are features to be planned with *AF*'s writers,

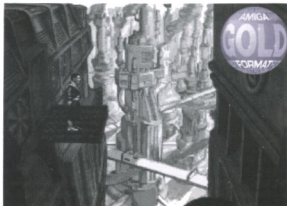
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pages to be subbed on the Mac using XPress and final pages to be passed for press.

You see my job crosses over the boundaries of other people's jobs – sometimes I'll have my production editor's hat on (well, only when Richard Jones lets me wear it), sometimes a referee's whistle is my tool for keeping the team from killing each other, and other times I'll simply sit quietly in the corner tapping away at my keyboard, occasionally requesting Frank to turn the music down, to which he responds: "Who's that dizzy old bird in the corner?"

To give you a better idea of what it's like, here's what a typical day (Tuesdays excluded because it's impossible to do any work with the phones ringing with reader calls all day) might involve:

8.30am: Drive the 12 miles from Bristol to Bath through winding country lanes (well, the A4, actually) listening to mellow tunes.

9.30am: Walk into AF office, say hello to the two Richards because they're always in before everyone else (Rich Jones is a dad and Rich Baguley hasn't got anything better to do). Make a particularly strong cup of black coffee to wake me up properly.

10.00am: Answer E-mails and open mail. Check with Rich J what he's expecting from me. Start working on it.

11.00am-1.00pm: Work is frequently interrupted by questions, phone calls, faxes and sandwich men (there's a sandwich van full swing at the moment so you've got to shop wisely to get the best bargain – 80 pence for a BLT on brown and a packet of crisps is the best buy this week).

1.00-2.00pm: Sue, Frank and I jog round our body toning class (happily consultant editor Nick Veitch's fictional morning jogs, this one actually happens).

2.00pm-4.00pm: Finish all the stuff I started doing in the morning.

4.00pm-5.00pm: Go to the boardroom for a meeting with someone about something to do with the magazine.

5.00-6.00pm: Production dept tell me AF has two ads in two of our sister magazines and they have to have the film for them tonight. Work on them with Sue or Frank.

6.00pm: Leave myself notes about all the things I didn't do today.

6.15pm: Go to the pub.

Drive through to 3DO, Jaguar and CD32, to the new systems en route from Japan.

However, a few weeks ago, the games industry was called to the ECTS Show at the Business Design Centre in Islington. Where, twice yearly, publishers and hardware manufacturers are called upon to put their wares on display. I spent a whole day weaving through the glitzy stands but, given that all the big players – Sega, Nintendo, Atari, Electronic Arts, Ocean and so on – were there, the one single game that grabbed my attention to any degree was *Super Stardust* on the Team 17 stand.

Coded by a couple of Finnish programmers, this A1200/CD32 upgrade of *Stardust* was the only game that made me stop and stare (remember the demo on AF9's Coverdisk?). The tunnel bonus stage from *Stardust* – which is pretty impressive on an A600 – is now breathtaking. Imagine swooping along a cylindrical tunnel, which is full of holes, and through those holes you can see another, similar tunnel outside, moving in parallel... take it from me, it's mindblowing.

And the lovely thing about it is that I haven't a clue how they did it! That's the beauty of the Amiga: the machine has an open architecture into which anyone with a keyboard and a little technical knowledge can delve and experiment.

Because it's available to everyone – not just 'professional' programmers – Amiga owners end up with a constant stream of technologically brilliant software. It's no

What would you like in Backstage?

Backstage is the part of the magazine (all right, so it's a separate bit) especially for subscribers. It's a way of thanking you for committing yourselves to the magazine for a whole year at a time. It's also a place to discuss things; a forum to tell you things that we can't tell other readers, more for lack of space than because we don't like them. And it's a place to get to know the team, and find out what's going on behind the scenes here at Future Publishing. If there's anything you would like to see in it, write to: *Backstage*, Amiga Format, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

coincidence that console owners, specifically Sega and Nintendo gamers, have had to be content with safe, conventional, conveyor belt products: primarily platform games, racing games and sports sims. Over the last year, there have been so few games worth playing – let alone shelling out 40-odd quid for – on the consoles. Amiga gamers don't know how lucky they are!

Now that coders are turning their attention on the AGA chipset, I'm sure we can expect to see some gorgeous products – and not just games, either. Then we have the Amiga's CD-ROM drive, due for release in September, which again opens up doors to conversions of many excellent PC products, while also giving software houses an extremely good reason to code for the CD32 format. ☺

Arthur C Clarke's on my new desk

The one major drag about changing magazines is swapping over offices. And the Amiga Format office is slightly more difficult to swap with than most. With eight members of the team, the entire Amiga Shopper crew and a fridge, I've been temporarily banished to Marcus' old desk beyond the perimeter wire until a more space-efficient set-up is made.

Then, after struggling downstairs with armfuls of 'stuff' that I've gathered over the years (vital editorial accessories like my artificial dog-poo and lucky pool ball), I suddenly find this too is now off-limits. Nick and Baggers have seconded my desk, which is now taken up with a huuuuge PC sucking in data from a 25MB tape drive.

It transpires that this tape machine belongs to none other than Arthur C Clarke and the data consists of images for his forthcoming book, *The Snows Of Olympus*. For the last two years Arthur has been busy rendering images of Mars as it would appear during the process of terra-forming. Using a souped-up Amiga 4000 and a copy of *Vista Pro*, he's produced scenes of famous Martian landmarks, such as Mons Olympus (which, if I remember correctly, is three times the height of Everest) clad in the finery of a living, breathing planet. Rivers flow along its canyons, waves crash against its deep red coastline, and its hills and valleys are green with vegetation. By all accounts it should make an engrossing read and with 86 rendered plates, it should have some nice pictures as well. The book is due out in Autumn, but AF will have the full exclusive including (hopefully) an interview with Arthur in the near future. (Now, if only I can convince our publisher that it really requires someone to visit Doc Clarke in Sri Lanka...).

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Subscriber Superdisk

Issue 60 • June 1994

On this month's action-packed Superdisk, Richard Baguley brings you Asteroids, a diary, a clock, a worm game and much much more...

GETTING STARTED

This disk is not bootable, so to access the programs on it, boot up your Amiga using your Workbench disk. The programs have been compressed using Stefan Boberg's LHA program. To decompress them, click on the appropriate icon. This starts a script which decompresses the programs and files to the RAM disk. You can run them from here, or copy them to another disk.

ON THIS MONTH'S DISK...

We have the following excellent PD and Shareware programs.

AMIGADIARY - A useful desktop diary and appointments utility that only takes up a small amount of memory, so it can easily run with other programs.

DIESERZUG - A Workbench worm game that demands skill and reflexes.

TITLECLOCK - Adds a clock to the title bar of your Workbench screen.

ASTEROIDS - An excellent conversion of the arcade classic shoot-em-up game.

DYNAMIC SKIES - Watch the skies with this rather nice astronomy program which has

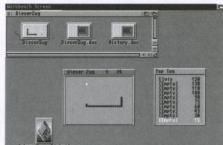
details of more than 5,000 stars and other objects in the night sky.

DOSTRACE - Keeps track of programs by tracking which files and libraries they open. An invaluable tool for debugging programs.

IFF2ASC - Create bizarre images with this unusual, but intriguing program.

SOUNDEFFECT - Manipulate your samples in all sorts of weird and wonderful ways, including echo, noise and flanging

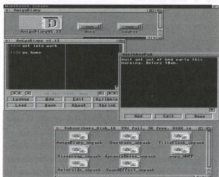
To expand any of these programs, simply double-click on the appropriate icon to decompress it to your RAM disk. From here, you can easily copy it to another disk by simply dragging the directory icon to the disk.



You see that little white dot? That's your breakfast, that is. That's your favourite meal.

simple doesn't it? And indeed it would be, except for the fact that the worm has the annoying habit of growing larger the more it eats, and if he or she (or should that be it?) hits either the sides or its own tail, it's goodnight wormie and end of game.

You guide the worm with the cursor keys. You can also alter the speed using the 1, 2, and 3 keys, and the Esc key quits the game. *Dieserzug* is an open ended game, so the white dots just keep appearing for as long as the worm is able to get to them.



Do you need something to help organise your life? Try *AmigaDiary* with its handy scribble pad.

AMIGADIARY

This is an excellent diary and appointments book, written in C by Andrew K Pearson. Although *AmigaDiary* is not a particularly fancy or complex program, it is a very useful thing to have running on your Workbench while you're working on something else.

The program starts off in a minimised form, so it won't clog up your Workbench. To expand it, just click on the Close gadget to the left of the *AmigaDiary* title. This takes you into the main screen. From here, you can add new entries (with the Add button), edit existing ones (with the Edit button) or jump to a specific date (with the Lookup button).

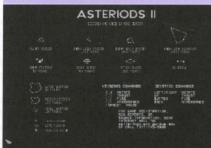
Alternatively, you can move forwards or backwards a single day by using the single arrow, or skip forward or back a week with the double arrow. There is also a rather useful scribble pad (which you access with the Scribble button) where you can write general notes and reminders.

To shrink the *AmigaDiary* program back down to the small size, use the Shrink button. The author has also included some further documentation and the full source code for your delectation.

DIESERZUG

I've no idea what *Dieserzug* means, but this is a rather nice version of the old classic *Worm*, where you have to guide a worm around a screen towards a number of white dots which form his or her staple diet. It all sounds so

ASTEROIDS

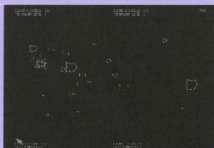


As you can see, there are a comprehensive range of fearsome nasties to deal with.

If you have never come across the *Asteroids* arcade game, you must have led a very sheltered life, be very very young, or not be the least bit interested in games. This is an excellent version of *Asteroids* - one of the best-ever arcade games.

The idea is very simple: you control a spaceship which flies around blasting asteroids and generally making life difficult for the aliens. You have, for some reason, been transported into a weird universe filled with asteroids and to get out and on to the next level, you have to destroy all of them.

When you shoot one of the asteroids, it breaks into several smaller ones, which you have to then shoot again. There are also various types of aliens who aren't too happy about your asteroid-blasting activities, and who try to shoot you. Fortunately, you can hyperspace around the screen in an effort to avoid their attentions.



In the heat of battle, it's easy to crash into an asteroid by mistake, but this should be avoided.

Before playing this game, you need to copy the fonts it uses into the right location. After decompressing *Asteroids* to the RAM disk, just go into the Shell and type in the following command:

```
Copy Ram:Asteroids/fonts fonts: all
```

You need about 17K of free space on your Workbench disk before doing this. Once the files have copied, quit out of the Shell and reboot your machine. You can now play *Asteroids*.

There are various options you can set from the main menu of the game. Pressing F4 shows you the sort of alien nasties you are up against, and F5 enables you to change the keys which control your ship. To play the game, press F1. F2 allows you to change various options such as the number of players and the level of difficulty.

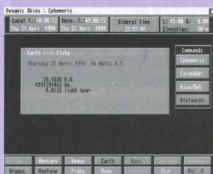
DYNAMIC SKIES



Are the stars out tonight? I can't tell if it's cloudy or bright, because I only have eyes for you...

Dynamic Skies is an extremely good astronomy program, but you don't need a telescope to use it. It's designed to give you a view of what the sky would be like at any point in time, so you can pinpoint the planets and other interesting features of our big and somewhat confusing universe.

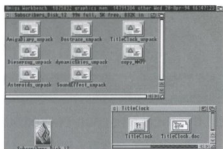
When you start off the program, you are given the current view if you have a real-time clock fitted. Otherwise, you should set the current date and time by clicking on the Universal Time box. You can view any planet



If you want to calculate the distance between the Earth and Pluto, *Dynamic Skies* is for you.

or constellation by clicking on one of the buttons at the bottom of the screen, and you can set various options for what is displayed by clicking on the Extras buttons in the bottom right corner of the screen.

To select what *Dynamic Skies* displays, have a look around in the Visual menu. For example, Deep Sky displays objects such as galaxies and nebula which may not be visible to the naked eye, while Planets shows the position of all the planets in our solar system plus the sun and moon.

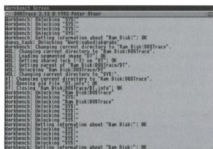


TitleClock may not look like the most profound change in Workbench technology, but isn't it nice to have a little clock on your screen?

TITLECLOCK

This program is the sort of thing that you can stick on to your Amiga and then forget about completely. All it does is put a small clock on the top bar of your Workbench screen so you can see exactly how long you have been playing *Dineroz*. And that's about it.

To get it to run automatically, just drag the *TitleClock* file into your WBStartup drawer, and it will start whenever you switch on your Amiga. You can change various aspects of the way the text is displayed and what exactly it displays by altering the tooltypes on the Icon. Check the documentation with the program for details on how to do this.



Ever wondered what happens when you load up a program? *DOSTrace* tells you in hideous detail.

DOSTRACE

DOSTrace is a program for the more technically-minded Amiga user, or just the plain curious. *DOSTrace* tells you which programs are trying to do things to files or libraries by monitoring the AmigaDOS functions which carry out these tasks.

This means that you can work out exactly where a program is failing and which file or library it's trying to open when it fails. This is extremely useful for both debugging and installing software.

You can even specify precisely which functions (such as *Examine*, *Rename*, *Open*, *Delete*) you want the program to monitor, so you can cut down on the amount of information which appears on the screen.

If you start the program from Workbench, *DOSTrace* opens a screen and gives you the list of functions, but this can be easily redirected to a file or the serial port by adding an option to the info file of the program.

Check the documentation, which is stored in both normal text and AmigaGuide format, for further details.

One thing you may notice is that programs run slightly more slowly when *DOSTrace* is in action. This is because every time a program carries out a function such as opening or deleting a file, *DOSTrace* steps in and makes a

note of what the program is doing. As you'd expect, this takes a short, but noticeable, amount of time, and leads to a decrease in the program's speed.

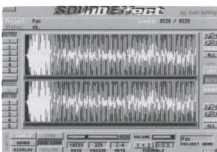
SOUNDEFFECT

SoundEffect is a program for processing samples in a number of weird and wonderful ways, which include adding noise, echo, chorus or distortion. *SoundEffect* works with any Amiga sample, and can even load raw sample data taken from a tune.

This is the unregistered version, which has a few limitations – for example, you can only save one sample in a session and you can't save the preferences. However, there are enough functions to enable you to do some serious sample fiddling with this version.

There are several samples included with the program, and you can load them by clicking on the Disk I/O button and selecting one of the samples held in the Workshop directory. Try loading the *Pan.org* or the *rsSnare* file by selecting it from the list and clicking on the Load Sample button.

Now you've loaded the sample into memory, you can carry out any of the various manipulations by selecting one of the buttons in the bottom right of the screen and setting the various options.



Fancy a nice bit of echo? Fancy a nice... Look no further than *SoundEffect*, which can do all manner of wonderful things to your samples.

IFF2ASC

Any of you old enough to have visited the Science Museum in the late Seventies probably have fond memories of the rather magnificent machine which scanned in a video image and printed it out with the dots replaced by different characters. This meant you could see the characters from close up, but they blended together to form the image from a distance.

Technology has moved on, so you can create this baffling effect in the comfort of your own home on your Amiga. *Iff2asc* takes a low-resolution 16-colour greyscale image and transforms it into a text file. It's very easy to use, but you should read the documentation for further details.



AF's new editor Steve Jarratt as we've never seen him before, thanks to *Iff2asc*.

If you have any suggestions, comments or programs that you would like to see on the Subscribers' Superdisk, please write to:

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